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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 03471

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: WHY HAS THE FARC DECLARED A UNILATERAL TRUCE?

REF: BOGOTA 3191 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

[1](#)2. SUMMARY: THE FARC'S CEASEFIRE ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEBRUARY 28 (REFTEL) HIGHLIGHTED THAT GROUP'S ONGOING ATTEMPTS TO PRESSURE THE GOC INTO DECLARING ITS OWN CEASEFIRE AND FORCE IT INTO ENGAGING IN PEACE TALKS WITH ALL FOUR GUERRILLA GROUPS IN THE SIMON BOLIVAR GUERRILLA COORDINATOR (SBGC). THE FARC STRATEGY STEMS FROM POLITICAL AS WELL AS MILITARY IMPERATIVES. THE GOC IS NOT BUYING IT. END SUMMARY

THE FARC PLOY; THE GOC RESPONSE

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[1](#)2. THE FARC WANTS THE GOC TO CALL OFF THE TROOPS AND ENGAGE IN PEACE TALKS WITH THE SIMON BOLIVAR GUERRILLA COORDINATOR (SBGC). ITS DECISION TO DECLARE A UNILATERAL TRUCE FOLLOWING THE APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMISSION OF NOTABLES IS ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL, AS IS ITS LATEST TACTIC OF SENDING A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE GROUP OF EIGHT IN HOPES OF ENLISTING THEIR SUPPORT TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON BARCO TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SBGC. THE GOC HAS REFUSED TO BE PRESSURED.

[1](#)3. THE GUERRILLA STRATEGY TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT INTO DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN EVIDENT SINCE AT LEAST MID 1988, WHEN THE M-19 FORCED THE CREATION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR DEMOCRATIC COEXISTENCE AS THE PRICE FOR THE RELEASE OF ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO. THE GOC SUCCESSFULLY WITHSTOOD THE M-19 PLOY AND THEN BEGAN A MORE PLANNED APPROACH OF ITS OWN TO REGAIN POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE PEACE ISSUE. ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1988, THE GOC CODIFIED AND PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THE POLICY IT HAD IN ESSENCE BEEN FOLLOWING SINCE BARCO CAME INTO OFFICE IN AUGUST 1986; TO WIT: WE WILL NOT TALK FOR THE SAKE OF TALK (IMPLICATION -- AS BETANCUR DID), BUT MUST DEMAND PROOF BY WORD AND DEED THAT THE GUERRILLAS ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING PEACE. ONCE THAT HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED WE WILL TALK.

[1](#)4. THE GOC IS TALKING WITH THE M-19 BECAUSE THAT GROUP DECLARED ITS TRUCE OVER SIX MONTHS AGO. THIS, COMBINED WITH THE GOC'S DESIRE TO SHOW THAT ITS PEACE PLAN WILL WORK, MOTIVATED THE GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE M-19. THE GOC FEELS UNDER NO PRESSURE TO RUSH INTO TALKS WITH THE FARC AND CAN POINT TO ITS TRACK RECORD VIS A VIS THE M19 TO DEFEND ITS POSITION. RAFAEL PARDO TOLD THE PRESS IN MEXICO MARCH 4 THAT "THE GOVERNMENT AGREES WITH DIRECT PEACE TALKS WITH THE GUERRILLA. IT INITIATED THEM IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR WITH THE M-19 BECAUSE THAT GROUP HAD DEMONSTRATED OVER THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS A SINCERE DESIRE FOR PEACE. THE FARC DECLARED ITS TRUCE ONE WEEK AGO. WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST SUCH A DECLARATION, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT GOING TO INITIATE ANY DIALOGUE WITH ANY GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION IF IT CONTINUES ITS TERRORISM, KIDNAPPINGS, AMBUSHES AND EXTORTION." IN ESSENCE, THE GOVERNMENT CAN

SIT BACK AND WAIT TO SEE IF THE FARC COMPLIES WITH ITS PROMISE TO END HOSTILITIES, INCLUDING EXTORTION.

#### THE MILITARY MOTIVATION

15. IT APPEARS THAT THE FARC DECLARATION OF A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE HAD ROOTS IN MILITARY EVENTS AS WELL. MILITARY SOURCES SPECULATE THAT THE FARC WAS HURT WHEN IT LOST AN IMPORTANT ARMS SHIPMENT IN JANUARY (SEE BOGOTA 315) AND, IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, HAS INCURRED MORE CASUALTIES THAN EXPECTED. IN ADDITION, CAMPESINOS IN KEY AREAS HAVE BEGUN SUPPORTING THE ARMY AND ITS ANTI-SUBVERSIVE OPERATIONS MORE THAN IN THE PAST -- AN ADDITIONAL SETBACK TO THE FARC.

16. DEFENSE ATTACHE CONTACTS IN THE ARMED FORCES BELIEVE THAT THE FARC'S CEASEFIRE AND ITS INSISTENCE ON DIALOGUE WITHOUT DISARMAMENT IS A POLITICAL PLOY TO GAIN "TIME AND SPACE" TO BUILD UP THEIR FORCES. ACCORDING TO THEM, 1989 IS A CRITICAL YEAR FOR THE FARC, ONE IN WHICH IT HOPES TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT WOULD LEAD TO "GENERAL INSURRECTION" IN 1990. THESE SOURCES SHARE PRESIDENT BARCO'S SUSPICIONS (REFTEL, PARA. 4) THAT THE FARC IS USING THE TRUCE AND PEACE DIALOGUE AS PRETEXTS TO GAIN A BREATHING SPELL AND COME BACK STRONGER IN LATE 1989.

17. IN CONCLUSION, THE ONUS IS ON THE FARC TO PROVE IT IS SERIOUS ABOUT PEACE. FARC LEADERS WILL LIKELY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONTROL THEIR SPREAD OUT AND DECENTRALIZED FRONTS, ESPECIALLY PREVENTING THEM FROM CARRYING OUT THEIR NORMAL "TAX" COLLECTIONS. IF THE FARC CAN MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE, PRESSURE WILL MOUNT ON THE GOVERNMENT TO OPEN TALKS. IF IT CANNOT, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE FREE TO PURSUE ITS CURRENT PEACE PLAN WHILE KEEPING THE MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE FARC.

MCNAMARA